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Star Wars War

Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI) director USAF Lt. Gen. James A. Abrahamson anticipates a congressional donnybrook over the Fiscal 1986 budget request for \$3.7 billion and has started a series of meetings with congressional leaders to gain support for the ballistic missile defense research program. Abrahamson will testify Feb. 21 before the Senate Armed Services subcommittee on strategic and theater nuclear forces. He warned the subcommittee chairman, Sen. John Warner (R.-Va.), that any large funding reduction would damage a carefully balanced multiyear funding approach and would disrupt the research timetable. Abrahamson, former head of the space shuttle program, said similar funding disruptions caused a variety of problems with the shuttle, including slippage.

Nine new members of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence represent the largest influx of new faces since the group was created eight years ago. New chairman Sen. David Durenberger (R.-Minn.) wants the committee's staff to consist of full-time specialists who report to a staff director, rather than staffers designated by individual senators. The present staff director, Robert Ruhl Simmons, who has military and Central Intelligence Agency experience, is considering joining a university faculty. Another departing staffer is Angelo Codevilla, an outspoken Star Wars proponent and committee gadfly. Codevilla returns to the staff of Sen. Malcolm Wallop (R.-Wyo.). The next skirmish will be in Wisconsin Democrat Les Aspin's House Armed Services Committee staff, where the incumbents are already digging slit trenches.